

Deep survival: Experiences of some who lived when they might have died in the 7 February 2009 bushfires

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Abstract:

As a result of the 7 February 2009 ('Black Saturday') bushfires, 173 Victorians perished in Australia's worst bushfire disaster to date. In the aftermath, attention has been focused largely on these fatalities. We argue that important lessons can also be learned from the experiences of those who did not perish, but lived despite being on the margin of survivability during the extreme conditions. Transcripts of 301 interviews with survivors, conducted by members of the Bushfire CRC Taskforce for the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, were re-examined. It was judged that 33 of those interviewed survived conditions so adverse that they might well have died. It was concluded, tentatively, that the major contributor to "deep survival" by the majority of these interviewees was that they were able to maintain their mental focus on acting in such a way as to maximize their chances of surviving the extreme environment. Analysis of the interview transcripts suggests that in spite of physical distress and the pressing danger of their situation, they: (a) retained control over fear; and (b) maintained their attentional focus on the major threats to life and the implications of these threats for actions.

[<http://www.em.gov.au/Publications/Australianjournalofemergencymanagement/Pages/AJEMvolume26/DeepSurvivalExperienceofsomewholivedwhenthey might have died in the 7 February 2009 Bushfires.asp>]

Source: <http://arrow.latrobe.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/latrobe:35088;jsessionid=E8A6ECE518A3FE3C217D7ADFED27F23C>

Resource Description

Exposure : ■

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

Extreme Weather Event: Wildfires

Geographic Feature: ■

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ■

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact: ■

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Mitigation/Adaptation: ■

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Resource Type: ■

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience: ■

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ■

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified